Remarks by the Honorable Frederick Gregory
NASA Deputy Administrator
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Thank you Don (Gen. Don Peterson, Executive Director Air Force Association) for that very generous introduction and good afternoon everyone.

I'm delighted you asked me to participate on this panel, and look forward to some excellent discussion with General Lord (Gen. Lance Lord, Commander, Air Force Space Command) and Lt. General Hamel (Lt. Gen. Michael Hamel, Commander, Space and Missile Systems Center) and our audience members about the importance of American leadership in space activities, both on the civil and military side.

But first, I would like to comment on two other subjects in a descending order of importance.

Two weeks ago we witnessed the worst natural disaster in American history. Both the Air Force and NASA family were affected by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, with many of our people being caught in the storm's wake.

I commend the Air Force Association for your efforts to encourage members to contribute to the Air Force Aid Society in addition to other charities dealing with the tremendous humanitarian challenge we face.

At NASA, we have something called the NASA Family Assistance Fund, which is providing NASA Gulf Coast employees and their families with grant and loan assistance to help supplement other emergency funding assistance. Anyone in this audience who is so inclined can learn more about the NASA Family Assistance Fund at the web site of the Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund www.feea.org. Again, that's www.feea.org.

Both our Stennis Space Center in Mississippi and Michoud Shuttle External Tank Assembly Facility in New Orleans were hit hard by Katrina and the flooding that ensued.

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, we've been working hard to make sure that all our NASA and contractor employees are contacted and found safe, and we continue to be engaged in this effort.

We've opened a Relocation Assistance Center at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, to support NASA employees and contractors evacuated or relocating to the Huntsville area from Stennis and Michoud. Through this center we are helping evacuees and their families resolve financial concerns, find temporary or long-term housing, and receive needed services.

During the storm a number of our employees demonstrated incredible bravery and commitment in risking their lives to protect other lives, including hundreds of people who sought shelter at Stennis as the hurricane passed through, as well as the facilities and flight hardware that were entrusted to them.

Turning to the important work of recovery that lies ahead, NASA is committed to maintaining our proud tradition of utilizing the Stennis Space Center and Michoud Assembly Facility to produce the space hardware and research applications products that contribute so greatly to our nation's space activities.

The outstanding people of Stennis and Michoud have stood by NASA in good times and bad, and NASA's leadership is determined to honor their commitment. You can count on it.

Now prior to discussing NASA's space activities, I hope you will permit me to add a personal note.

I announced last week that I will resign as NASA's Deputy Administrator, following 31 wonderful years as a test pilot, astronaut and member of NASA's leadership. After my announcement, I've received many good wishes from friends throughout the space and Air Force community.

I want to express from the bottom of my heart how much those good wishes mean to me.

In my career I've worked for two organizations that are simply the best. And I can't say enough about the experiences I've had and the wonderful people I've met along the way.

The United States Air Force is the world's premier organization devoted to preserving the peace and defending freedom through air and space force projection, and may it ever be so.

I might add, parenthetically, that for the first time in years, my team, the Air Force Academy Falcons, have demonstrated a proven and potent aerial attack. So there's progress all around.

And I'm convinced that NASA, through the work it does to pioneer the space frontier, is the world's greatest research and exploration agency.

Thirty-one years ago, a young pilot who earned his spurs flying helicopters and fixed winged aircraft in Vietnam got new orders from Uncle Sam. I was assigned to work as a test pilot at NASA's Langley Research Center.

My orders said my stay at NASA would last two years.

I'll bet there are a number of people in the audience who know a thing or two about how orders have a funny way of growing on you.

So here I am, 31 years later, still at NASA, still waiting to get my next set of orders! And I know my wife Barbara is eager to tell me, "I told you so!"

At any rate, I'm very happy with my decision to end my career at the space agency, and search out other productive things I can do for my country.

As I prepare to take leave, I must tell you that I've never been as proud of the work that NASA conducts for the American public, and hopeful about the future of the space program as I am today.

Through our Vision for Space Exploration, the bold plan to employ astronaut pioneers and robotic pathfinders in opening up the solar system to the expansion of human civilization, NASA has a challenge worthy of our nation's questing spirit.

It is also an exploration program, that as President Bush has said, will enhance America's long-term economic, scientific and security interests.

On this latter matter, let me suggest a couple of ways in which our exploration agenda will be good for the nation's security.

Just as the Apollo moon landing program inspired the youth of America to pursue exciting careers in scientific and engineering fields, so we believe our bold program to set up base camps on the moon, Mars and beyond will inspire a new generation of scientists, engineers and astronauts, many of whom will also work for the armed services or companies that support the nation's defense.

Second, to successfully implement our Vision, we will need to accelerate development of a number of cutting edge technologies, all of which are useful for national security purposes.

I'm confident that NASA will be at the forefront in advances in robotics, autonomous and fault tolerant systems, human-machine interface, materials, life support systems and novel applications of micro devices.

NASA's interest in developing the space launch vehicles and spacecraft that will take crews and supplies well beyond low Earth orbit has also spurred productive cooperation on items of mutual interest in space transportation requirements between the space agency and the defense community.

In this regard, last month NASA Administrator Mike Griffin and the DOD Executive Agent for Space, Dr. Ron Sega, signed a letter which outlined our agreement on our respective requirements for future launch systems.

Responding to the President's National Security Policy Directive 40, the agreement stipulates that separating human-rated space exploration from unmanned payload launch will best achieve reliable and affordable assured access to space while maintaining our industrial base in both liquid and solid propulsion launch systems.

The major elements of the agreed strategy for the use and development of national launch systems are as follows:

First, both NASA and DoD will utilize the Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle for all intermediate and larger payloads for national security, civil and science missions in the 5 to 20 metric-ton-class to the maximum extent possible consistent with the law and national policies. Where practical, this will include re-supply missions to the Space Station.

Second, NASA will initiate development of a Crew Launch Vehicle, derived from Space Shuttle solid rocket boosters with a new upper-stage for human spaceflight missions in the 25 to 30 metric-ton-class. This vehicle will support missions to the Space Station and then on to the surface of the Moon.

And third, NASA will begin development after 2010 of a new 125 metric-ton-class launch vehicle that will carry on in the tradition of the Saturn Five in supporting the next great era of lunar exploration.

The agreement also calls on NASA and DoD to explore mutually beneficial cooperation for new upper stage development, advanced materials, other new propulsion technologies and potential ride-shares on manned and unmanned missions, with both sides hitching rides on each others capabilities.

Significantly, the NASA-DoD agreement complements the work initiated last April within NASA to design the complete architecture for our new human-rated space craft and cargo carriers that will enable our astronauts to make the seventh human lunar landing before the end of the next decade.

There are other areas of cooperation worth mentioning.

Through the Space Partnership Council, formed seven years ago between NASA and the Air Force Space Command, with the later additions of the U.S. Strategic Command, Defense Research and Engineering and the National Reconnaissance Office, we are also working together to significantly improve our space communications technological capabilities.

The Partnership Council is looking at the possibility of combining future communications capabilities in support of our space satellite operations and implement those in a system that will serve all of the parties.

Through what we are calling a Transformational Communications Architecture we are seeking to expand inter-networking and interoperability, increase the protection of data rates, enhance communications redundancy, allow for quicker data access searches, and provide new ways to support manned spaceflight and scientific data collection and dissemination. Again, all parties will benefit from this unique partnership.

And finally, through NASA's Earth Observation System, we are developing a flotilla of 26 Earth observing satellites and other technologies that will help provide scientists a solid foundation for understanding the complex Earth climate system.

In this effort, we are demonstrating a number of unique uses for imagers, radars and lasers needed to probe the Earth system, structure and dynamics. In addition to their scientific promise, the national security community has identified potential uses for these technologies. As a consequence, we are working through the Partnership Council, to help our colleagues better understand and utilize these emerging technologies.

Friends, back in 1941 Henry Luce, the founding editor of Time Magazine, predicted the coming of the American Century, a time when we would "accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation of the world."

By Luce's standard, we are still in the midst of the American Century, and I firmly believe what we can do in the civil and military space community to advance progress in our common fields has never been more critical for our country. And we definitely need to do more. So I commend all of you for your commitment to unmatched American leadership in the air and space.

I thank you for the wonderful privilege of being a part of the great Air Force and NASA tradition, and I look forward to taking your questions and talking to folks after the program.